

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0217

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MASS, MORG, PGOV, GY
SUBJECT: US LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY RELATIONS: GUYANA

REF: 77 STATE 306726

1. THE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE (GDF) AND ITS OFFICER CORPS DO NOT PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY DECISIONS. IN KEEPING WITH BRITISH TRADITION, THE GDF HAS BEEN AND REMAINS SUBSERVIENT TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT CONTROL. EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE GUYANESE MILITARY, BOTH IN TERMS OF TRAINING AND SUPPLY, HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY WITH THE BRITISH BEMILITARY, ALTHOUGH RECENTLY SOME TRAINING FOR GDF OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL HAS TAKEN PLACE IN CUBA. REPORTEDLY SOME QUANTITIES OF SMALL ARMS HAVE BEEN OBTAINED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS FROM BOTH YUGOSLAVIA AND CUBA.

2. EMBASSY RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS POSED REFTEL ARE PROVIDED BELOW IN LETTERED SEQUENCE.

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A. OFFICERS OF THE EMBASSY IN THE COURSE OF MAKING AND RETAINING THEIR NORMAL CONTACTS HAVE DEVELOPED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH OFFICERS OF THE GDF. CONTINUED DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND GUYANESE MILITARY WILL BE USEFUL AS PART OF OUR EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE AND MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA.

IN GENERAL, GDF SENIOR OFFICERS ARE WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE US. THEY APPEAR TO WELCOME SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS WITH BRITISH AND US MILITARY AND CIVILIANS. HOWEVER, GUYANA'S MILITARY OFFICERS ARE NOT A MAJOR CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION TO THE POWER CENTER OF THE GOG. SUCH COMMUNICATION IS CONDUCTED DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE CIVILIAN LEADERS OF THE GOG.

B. AT PRESENT THERE ARE NO ONGOING US MILITARY OR US SERVICE RELATIONS WITH GUYANA'S MILITARY. THERE IS NEITHER RESIDENT NOR NON-RESIDENT SERVICE ATTACHE ASSIGNED TO THIS EMBASSY. THE ONLY CONTACT DURING THE PAST YEAR OCCURRED IN CONNECTION WITH A VISIT BY A SUBGROUP OF THE US NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE TO GUYANA IN MAY OF 1977. THE GROUP WAS RECEIVED WARMLY. WHILE GUYANESE OFFICERS WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME A SLIGHTLY GREATER DEGREE OF LOW KEY ATTENTION BY US MILITARY, THE ABSENCE OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS AT THE MOMENT CAUSES NO PROBLEMS.

C. THE GOG HAS REQUESTED THAT GUYANA BE MADE ELIGIBLE FOR FMS PURCHASES IN THE US. AS THE GUYANESE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TENDS TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE FACT THAT THE US HAS GRANTED SURINAM FMS ELIGIBILITY WHEREAS GUYANA DOES NOT APPEAR ON THE FMS LIST, THE EMBASSY CONTINUES CONFIDENTIAL

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TO FEEL THAT THE USG SHOULD GRANT THE GOG THE SAME ELIGIBILITY.

D. AS THE US HAS NO ARMS SALES TO GUYANA, IT HAS HAD NO SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE OVER TYPES OF EQUIPMENT PURCHASED FROM THIRD COUNTRIES. TO DATE, EQUIPMENT PURCHASES HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY IN SMALL ARMS AND LOGISTICAL EQUIPMENT. POSSIBLY WITH AN ACTIVE TRAINING OR MILITARY EXCHANGE PROGRAM THE US COULD HELP GUYANA RATIONALIZE ITS INVENTORIES, IMPROVE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROVIDE TECHNICAL TRAINING, BUT IT WOULD APPEAR THAT TO BE TRULY EFFECTIVE IN THESE AREAS THE US WOULD HAVE TO OFFER SOME SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. ACTUALLY, US INTERESTS IN THE AREA ARE PROBABLY BEST SERVED BY REINFORCING THE GOG'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND DOWNPLAYING THE NEED FOR MILITARY EXPENDITURES. IF THE GOG FELT FULLY CONFIDENT THAT THE US WOULD NOT FAVOR OR WOULD OPPOSE EXTERNAL AGGRESSION AGAINST GUYANA, PRESSURES FOR BUILDING UP THE GUYANESE MILITARY WOULD BE REDUCED.

E. PERSONNEL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, LEADERSHIP GRANTS, ATTENDANCE AT US MILITARY SCHOOLS, COULD PLAY A MODEST ROLE IN FURTHERING BROAD US INTERESTS.

F. NEAR-TERM GOG EXPENDITURES FOR ARMS FROM THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS WILL BE MINIMAL DUE TO THE CURRENT SHORTAGE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE. MID-TERM PURCHASES COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE SOMEWHAT LARGER BUT OF LITTLE COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE US. REPORTEDLY THE ARMS PROVIDED BY CUBA IN DEC 1976 WERE GIVEN ALMOST GRATIS. NEARLY ALL OF THE HELICOPTERS NOW BEING USED BY THE GDF WERE PURCHASED FROM US COMMERCIAL SOURCES.

3. WHILE THE EMBASSY WOULD RECOMMEND, FOR SYMBOLIC
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AND POLITICAL REASONS, THAT GUYANA BE PLACED ON PAR WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AS A COUNTRY ELIGIBLE FOR FMS SALES AND CREDITS, AND WOULD FAVOR SLIGHTLY GREATER ATTENTION FOR GUYANA FROM THE US MILITARY THAN IS NOW THE CASE, WE BELIEVE THAT US AND GUYANESE INTERESTS WOULD BOTH BE SERVED BY KEEPING THE ATTENTION OF GUYANESE LEADERS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES.
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